

# TIDINGS

OF HOLY NAME of JESUS NATIONAL CATHOLIC PARISH

A Monthly Newsletter of Information and Events

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## EARTH DAY'S LESSON FOR THE CHURCH

All around the globe one billion people are expected to participate in Earth Day activities on April 22<sup>nd</sup>. Earth Day has always been a bottom to top movement. Its popularity and motivation have always counted on a groundswell of support rather than political or corporate leaders acting with a strong environmental conscience. As a matter of fact, three conservation groups are currently suing the Department of the Interior. On January 9, 2007 the Fish and Wildlife Service proposed listing polar bears as threatened under the Endangered Species Act due to the declining amount of sea ice. A U.S. Geological Survey study has predicted that polar bears in Alaska could be wiped-out by 2050. The Interior Department had a full year to respond for or against this proposal. When that deadline came and went without any decision and after an additional two months of wasted time, the conservation groups sued the department to force them to fulfill their mandated responsibility.

Russia has placed their flag on the seabed beneath the North Pole. They have done this to advance their territorial claim to the area, and in so doing have agitated other Arctic Sea neighbours to pursue their own interests. The reason for all this activity is the prospect of an Arctic Sea free of summer sea ice by 2030, which would then open-up lucrative sea lanes. An awful lot of money and power is lined-up waiting for the sea ice to disappear. Is it any wonder then that the possible extinction of the polar bear in its natural habitat is very low on our government's priority list or that corporate leaders are basically silent? The only voice speaking on behalf of the natural habitat is coming from the groundswell of common folk.

Back in the early 1990's when I was at Smith College, one of my professors was also teaching at Harvard. He made mention of a freshman seminar there that dealt with the religious implications of the possible extinction of some sort of spotted owl. Genesis reveals that humankind has been granted "dominion" (1:26, 28) over creation, the

dominion that God Himself had wielded previously. For millennia this biblical citation was interpreted as justification for the human subjugation of creation for our own benefit. Nature was a resource to be used, but *dominion* gave the impression that it could also be abused. Dominion allowed for exploitation rather than conservation.

A full generation after the first Earth Day, Harvard's freshmen were just beginning to ask if this biblical concept of dominion implied, instead, the human guardianship of the natural creation, that we are to care for our ecosystem the way the Creator would. Now another decade later we are finally hearing churches speaking about our stewardship of creation as God's people. Here is a current example of the *sensus fidei* percolating up from the masses, a change in church teaching and perspective that was compelled by the conviction of ordinary belief and believers, often without the instruction, inspiration or guidance of church leadership. I was never taught about ecology in the Seminary; I do not teach it in my catechism classes; and I seldom preach about it. Yet, the environment has now become a religious cause.

There is a lesson here that may be applied more generally. For instance, church stances on the limitations placed upon women in the church, human sexuality, church administration, ecumenism, et al., show signs of spiritual agitation among the faithful. The idea of all matters of faith, morals and discipline belonging to the collared few at the expense of the baptized many deprives the church of spiritual vitality and enthusiasm. Parishioners' attitudes are changing, and this will eventually affect church teaching as is born out by the example of environmentalism. Even the Vatican has recently released a statement that environmental stewardship is now a spiritual obligation. This did not emerge from some infallible edict from on high. It developed from the *sensus fidei*, which was finally recognized and promulgated by church leaders. The church only harms herself when she carte blanche disparages the teaching

authority of all the faithful. Their *sensus fidei* may well be tomorrow's Synod-sanctioned official church teaching.

Scott Page, in his book *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools and Societies*, writes that organizations consisting of a heterogeneous membership are more productive than homogeneous ones because they bring different perspectives to bear on identifying and solving problems. Homogeneous groups, such as bishops and the clergy united with them, tend to get stuck at the same place and come with the same tools. They are thus, at times,

unable to move forward. Heterogeneous ones, on the other hand, may become mired at different places, but they are equipped with different tools to better solve these problems. If a church truly embraces the inspiration and thus authority of all her members, their *sensus fidei*, she is able to better express the eternal nature of God through all of the vicissitudes of human culture and epoch. Thus, the democracy of a church is her best guarantee of protecting the living tradition of a church community.

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**CALENDAR OF EVENTS**  
**MONTH OF APRIL**

April 1, 2008 – Anniversary of birth of Bp. Francis Hodur, organizer of our church denomination.

Bible study group begins a new season at 7:00pm.

April 2<sup>nd</sup> – Monthly Mass for Health at 6:30pm.

April 4<sup>th</sup> – Monthly visitations to the sick and the shut-in of the parish.

April 5<sup>th</sup> – Confession for the youth of the parish at 10:30am.

April 6<sup>th</sup> – Polish Mass will be recited at 7:45am.

April 8<sup>th</sup> – Monthly meeting of the Parish Committee at 7:00pm.

April 13<sup>th</sup> – Meeting of the YMSofR Men's Group at 10:00am.

April 15<sup>th</sup> – Bible study group at 7:00pm in the parish hall.

April 22<sup>nd</sup> – Earth Day.

April 27<sup>th</sup> – Monthly meeting of the Adoration Society at 10:00am.

April 29<sup>th</sup> – Bible study group will meet at 7:00pm in the parish hall.

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“Republics demand far more morally from their citizens than monarchies did of their subjects ... Without virtue and self-sacrifice republics would fall apart.” Gordon Wood in *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 1993, p. 105.

**BP HODUR'S ANNIVERSARY OF BIRTH**

Francis Hodur was born on April 1, 1866 in Zarki Poland. In 1893 he traveled to America and entered through Ellis Island. He had already begun his seminary training in Poland, and when

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he entered the United States he was eventually sponsored by the Roman Catholic diocese of Scranton, PA. He attended Seminary in Latrobe, PA and was ordained a Roman Catholic priest in 1893 in Scranton. After Ordination, he was assigned as the assistant pastor to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Parish in the South Side of Scranton. From this point forward, his life becomes intertwined with that of our church denomination. He would accept the pastorate of St. Stanislaus Parish in March 1897, which was the first parish of our church. He was consecrated a bishop by the Old Catholics in Utrecht, Holland in September 1907. As a bishop he remained the pastor in Scranton until his death in 1953 while simultaneously leading our church denomination. If there was no Francis Hodur, it is very possible that there would be no National Catholic Church today, or at least, it would not be the same reforming Catholic church of our heritage. For these reasons, even after 142 years, we should still pause and remember the birth of our first priest and bishop, Bp. Francis Hodur.

**BIBLE STUDY GROUP**

This year's Bible study group will start meeting on the very first day of this month. We will finish our reading of Old Testament history, and then shortly thereafter we will begin our study of the Gospel of St. Matthew, which is full of Old Testament references. Our group is very informal. We meet for one hour on alternate weeks from Spring through Fall. No previous Bible knowledge is required. All that is needed is a desire to gain a deeper appreciation for the book that stands abandoned on too many bookshelves.

The Bible is the written Word of God. It is God's revelation to us throughout the ages. It is the text-book of our faith. Today we hear so many different interpretations of what the Bible means, says and requires of us. If we do not know the Book, we are susceptible to all kinds of shams and fallacies. Come and discern for yourself what is written by actually reading the text of Sacred Scripture.

This is also an ecumenical group. Friends from local churches attend, as well. If a friend of yours would like to come with you to Bible study, please feel free to invite them. If you have any other questions, call the rectory at your convenience.

#### **MONTHLY MASS FOR HEALTH**

Now that Epiphany visitations and Lenten Devotions are completed we will begin our monthly practice of offering a Mass for Health. April's Mass will be said on the second of the month at 6:30pm. The congregation is invited to share the names of relatives or friends for whom they would have us pray. We also pray for our parishioners who are ill at the time. It is written in the Bible: "The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective." (James 5:16) I hope you will come and join us as we pray for those in need.

#### **YMSofR MEN'S GROUP**

The YMSofR Men's Group has decided to hold regular meetings on the second Sunday of the month after Mass. The group is planning to begin a work project on the pews in church. We want to shorten the front pews to better accommodate the caskets that are stationed in the main aisle during a funeral Mass. We have also talked about refurbishing the rectory garage. We also do fun things. We are planning to go out to eat in Williamsburg this month at *Big Mamou Cajun Restaurant*. If you would like to come and join our group, please speak with either Fr. Calvo or Brandon Poe, or simply come to our next meeting on April 13<sup>th</sup>.

#### **CHICKEN BARBECUE**

This year we will be trying something new at our Chicken Barbecue. It will still be held the first Sunday of August at the same place – the Hatfield Lion's Club Pavilion. But ... this year we have hired a Polish band to play and we will have beer and wine for sale. The *Dennis Polisky and the Maestro's Men Band* will entertain us (<http://www.maestrosmen.com/index.html>). The cost of hiring the band, obtaining a liquor

license, insurance and police will greatly add to the parish's cost for running the barbecue, but it is hoped that our parishioners and friends will choose to spend the afternoon with us and enjoy good food, music and company. The cost for tickets that include the chicken barbecue dinner and the music will be \$15 for adults and \$5 for children, and tickets to come in and just hear the music will be sold for \$5.

We are going to need many more volunteers this year than previously. We will probably be selling more dinner tickets; we will also need extra help managing the traffic, selling tickets, serving the meal and beverages, and probably a whole lot more. To get a better grip on what this day entails we will be convening subcommittees on publicity, serving and raffle. If you can help in any of these ways, please speak to Don Skroski or Fr. Calvo. Thank you.

#### **PARISH MISSION TEAM**

I would like to reconvene the Parish Mission Team this month. At our annual meeting we talked about the need to reach out to potential new members and that the use of mass media has not proved very effective for us. Our best results have always emerged from direct human contact and invitation. With this in mind, we need to gather again, to share ideas and to put them into action. We also need more than a handful of people. If you are willing to work on projects of parish outreach, please mention your interest to Fr. Calvo. I am thinking of holding a meeting on Thursday, April 10<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm in the parish hall. Please let me know about this date and time. Are you willing to come? Are you willing to help? Is another time better for you? Please give this group your serious consideration. Thank you.

#### **CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT FUND**

Next year our parish properties turn 80. Recently, the original specifications for building our church were discovered in a founding member's attic. It is impressive to see the amount of work that went into this edifice. Now it is our turn to maintain it. Recent donations have been offered by: Herb & Marge Sanderson, \$60; Jeff & Cindy Hubbard, \$40, and Don & Ellen Skroski, \$50, both in honour of the Foster's 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary; Carolyn Rapelye, \$20; and Robert & Anne Adamski, \$100. We thank you for your generosity.